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ABSTRACT

This study examined 122 juvenile books to determine how current authors and illustrators portray books, reading, and writing and how this portrayal reflects current literacy theories and recommended instructional practices. The theoretical framework of this study is grounded theory (GLaser and Strauss, 1967). Categories which emerged from the study were developed and analyzed based on the occurrences found in literature and illustrations: (1) emergent literacy and storytime reading; (2) reading aloud; (3) children or peers who teach one another to read or read better; (4) self-taught readers and/or writers; (5) learning to read or characters who cannot read or those who experience difficulty reading; (6) published literature references in texts; (7) reading and writing portrayed in school; (8) vocabulary as a goal; (9) a focus on letters, sounds, cursive writing, calligraphy, and spelling; (10) history of writing, alphabets, printing press and books; (11) literature written as letters, journals, or diaries; (12) authorship; and (13) the role of the library or bookstores, including the issue of censorship. Results indicated that, while the texts positively encourage reading and writing, current literacy theories and recommended instructional practices were not reflected in the literature examined. Findings revealed that the literature portrayed books, reading, and writing occurring across a broad spectrum of life and were not limited to use in the school classroom. The dominant image portrayed in children's literature was a positive celebration of books, reading, and writing. Further research should reanalyze the books by categories and analyze the instructional activities mentioned and the instructional strategies used. (Contains 3 tables of data, 26 references, and a list of juvenile books used in the study.) (Author/CR)

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Abstract

This study looks at how current authors and illustrators portray books, reading, or writing in quality literature published for children from 1990 through 1995. Initially children's literature titles were identified which portrayed books, reading, or writing. The rating and category systems used in *The Horn Book Guide* were instrumental in defining quality literature. One-hundred-twenty-two books were selected for the study.

The study addressed the following two questions. How do current authors and illustrators portray books, reading, or writing in literature written for children? Does this portrayal of books, reading, or writing reflect current literacy theories and recommended instructional practices? The theoretical framework of this study is grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The titles of the identified children's literature were read; numerous notes were made on the mention of books, reading, or writing; and categories were developed and analyzed based on the occurrences found in the literature read and illustrations viewed.

The categories which emerged from the study were: emergent literacy and story time reading; reading aloud; children or peers who teach one another to read or help one another read better; self-taught readers and/or writers; learning to read or characters who can't read or those who experience difficulty reading; published literature references in the texts; reading and writing portrayed in school; vocabulary as a goal; a focus on letters, sounds, cursive writing, calligraphy, and spelling; history of writing, alphabets, printing press and books; literature written as letters, journals, or diaries; authorship; and the role of the library or bookstores, including the issue of censorship.

The findings saw similarities in some areas, such as emergent literacy, use of reading aloud and discrepancies in the depiction of school tasks among the portrayal of books, reading, and writing in current children's literature, current theory, and instructional practices. The dominant image portrayed in the books was a positive celebration of books, reading, and writing. Also, books, reading, and writing occurred across a broad spectrum of life and were not limited to use in the school classroom.

A Look at How Books, Reading, or Writing are Portrayed in Children's Literature Published From 1990 Through 1995

Frequently, the educational literature extols the benefits of children becoming readers or engaging in wide reading (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988; Foertsch, 1992). Yet what kind of messages about books, the process of reading, or writing are the youth receiving from current children's literature that they are either reading themselves or that is being read to them? How do these implicit messages about books, reading, or writing compare with current theories of literacy and recommended practices for teaching reading or writing? This study looks at how current juvenile authors and illustrators portray books, reading, or writing in quality literature written for children.

Background to the Study

In this study I defined current juvenile authors and illustrators as those authors and illustrators of trade books for children that were published in the United States[1] from 1990 through 1995. This study considers current quality literature for children, originally published in the preceding six years (1990-1995) which depicts books, reading, or writing as part of their content. Books, reading, or writing may be a major topic or theme; a character or characters may demonstrate the use of books, reading, or writing in the publication; or an incidental depiction of books, reading, or writing may occur in the text or in the illustrations. The art work found in picture books is a rich source of data, concerning the depiction of positive views of reading or writing.

To determine a measure for quality literature in this study, I used the following procedure using *The Horn Book Guide to Children's and Young Adult Books,* (HBG) (Flowers, 1990a; 1990b; 1991a; 1991b; Silvey, 1992a; 1992b; Zeiger, 1993a; 1993b; 1994a; 1994b & 1995). This Guide publishes critical annotations of all children's hard cover trade and young adult books published in the United States within a six month period.[2] Initially, I relied upon the subject indexes in HBG to select specific titles from children's literature which depicted books, reading or writing. My research used the following specific classification categories: books and reading,

writing, letters, literacy, and school. The category school actually yielded many titles which dealt with other aspects of schooling rather than reading or writing and these titles were ultimately disqualified from the study.

To label a specific title as literature in this study, it is necessary for the title to be annotated and to be rated positively in the HGB, which ranks books from "one," a degree of excellence to "seven," a degree of total unacceptability. Titles which portrayed books, reading, or writing were read for the study, if they were rated by *The Horn Book Guide* as:

1 — outstanding

2 — superior

3 — recommended

For books rated as 4, "below average with minor flaws," they were read, but initially kept separate from the earlier books. Books rated as 5, 6, or 7 were discounted automatically from further consideration. Many of the books listed under the category of books and reading were rated 4, perhaps due to their somewhat didactic nature. Hence, in the study, I combined the 4 rankings with the higher listed rankings of 1, 2, and 3. The books eliminated from this study were the books rated as 5, 6, or 7 in the HBG.

As a reader of children's literature myself, I discovered that some titles which I knew to include powerful portrayals of reading or writing were not indexed under reading or writing categories. Thus, I decided to augment these subject indexes, with my own wide reading of juvenile works published from 1990 through 1995. As I uncovered titles which depicted reading or writing in the content of the publication, yet neither the HBG nor the library of congress classification system categorized the title under books and reading, writing, letters, literacy, or school, I included the title in my study provided the title was listed in the HBG with a quality rating of 1, 2, 3, and in some cases 4. These books were indexed under a wide variety of classification categories. Some of these books, for example, *Lyddie* (Paterson, 1991); or *Pink and Say* (Polacco, 1994); have major concepts not related to literacy, yet the manner in which a character or characters embraced reading or writing is pertinent to this study.

My only reservation, in the selection of titles for this study, is how many other titles published between 1990 and 1995 depict reading or writing, but are not indexed under categories indicating reading or writing, that I have not had the opportunity to read. The juvenile references at the conclusion of this paper list the titles of the one hundred-twenty-two books included in this study. The list is divided into two categories: picture books, which numbered 75 titles, and chapter books or novels which numbered 47 titles. Once I identified the specific titles for the study, I read the titles, took copious notes, and wrote down quotations of specific references to books, reading, or writing. I treated the texts provided by the authors and the illustrations provided by the illustrators as my data sources, which had to be used as I found them.

Among the identified group of one hundred-twenty-two books, approximately 25% represent diverse racial, cultural, or ethnic groups. Table 1 (Insert here.) lists the books, with characters representative of diverse racial and ethnic groups. Seventeen books depict the African-American culture, two books depict the Asian-American culture, two books portray the Latino-American culture, two books portray Native-American culture, or more specifically the Cherokee and Navaho nations, five books depict various diverse cultures, and two books display handicapping conditions.

Research questions:

1. How do current authors and illustrators portray books, reading, or writing in literature written for children?
2. Does this portrayal of books, reading, or writing reflect current literacy theories and recommended instructional practices?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In this qualitative study I have read the identified children's literature listed under References: Juvenile Books at the end of the paper and made numerous notes on the mention of books, reading, or writing in the literature. From these notes, I have developed categories that occurred in the text read and illustrations viewed. Finally, I analyzed the categories for patterns. From the patterns

displayed within the texts examined, the grounded theory emerges that is evident from the literature for children. I compared these patterns with current theory in reading or writing.

Methodology

As I read the 122 juvenile books, the following major categories became apparent:

- emergent literacy and/or bed time reading;
- reading aloud;
- children or peers who teach one another to read or help another to learn to read better;
- self-taught readers and/or writers;
- learning to read including age appropriate characters, characters who can't read, and characters who previously experienced difficulty reading;
- published literature mentioned within the texts in the study;
- reading and writing portrayed in school;
- vocabulary as the goal of reading;
- focus on components of reading or writing including: letters, sounds, cursive writing, orthography, calligraphy, and spelling;
- history of: writing or alphabets; the printing press and books;
- juvenile literature written in the form of letters, journals, or diaries; authorship;
- libraries or bookstores, including the issue of censorship.

Analysis of the Data or Categories Developed from the Books Selected:

Emergent literacy and/or bedtime reading emerges as a theme throughout many of the picture books. The importance of reading in the home is well documented along with the notion that it is never too early to start reading to children (Trelease, 1995). The literature depicts parents or older sibling reading to toddlers at bedtime. The book titled, *The Twins by Two* (Anholt, 1992) begins with father reading aloud a bedtime story to the twins. *Good Night Lily* (Alexander, 1993) is a board book for toddlers showing the concept of bedtime reading. Sardegna (1994) develops a bedtime alphabet book.

The inclusion of storybook reading whether at bedtime or other times during the day is a frequent episode seen in picture books for young children, published between 1990 and 1995. Sulzby and Teale (1991) in a chapter on emergent literacy confirm that storybook reading is an aspect of young children's literacy development which has received more research attention than any other. Thus, not only are the researchers studying storybook reading, but the authors and illustrators of quality books for children are also using storybook reading as a dominate experience in books for young children.

In many books for toddlers, reading or writing occupy a secondary role to the story, such as in *Do Like Kyla* (Johnson, 1990) where the younger sister imitates everything that Kyla does. Events also include reading a book. In *Happy Birthday, Jesse Bear* by Carlstrom (1994) Jesse Bear is seen writing invitations for his birthday party. At the end of the story, Jesse Bear receives the best present of all, a book from mom and dad. The reader is left wondering why the book was never opened. On a positive note, this toddler book depicts a young character writing, albeit a bear, but with human qualities. In companion books by Hughes, *Bouncing* (1993) and *Giving* (1993) show illustrations only of reading and writing on the inside covers of the two books. *Bouncing* shows a toddler reading a book among other actions. *Giving* shows a toddler writing a letter among other actions. These texts makes no mention of reading or writing.

Some books show emergent readers reading. In *Rachel Parker, Kindergarten Show-Off* (Martin, 1992) five year old Olivia and Rachel argue over who reads the best. Their kindergarten teacher selects both girls to jointly read a book aloud to the class. They help each other with the reading. In *Story Hour—Staring Megan* (Brillhard, 1992) six year old Megan saves the day during story hour, when she reads her favorite story to the assembled children, while her mother, the librarian, is taking care of her crying, younger brother.

Emergent literacy acknowledges the importance of young children viewing themselves as readers and writers. However, a few of the titles in the study exhibited the message that the young child is not able to read or write yet. For example, in *Come Back, JACK!* (Anholt and Anholt, 1994) the author keeps reinforcing the point that little Jack can't read. In *Finish the Story, Dad*

(Smee, 1991) dad is reading a bedtime story to Ruby, but stops before the story is finished. In a dreamlike fantasy, Ruby tries to find someone to finish the story. She asks different animals, but they all decline. Never is Ruby shown reading the book herself or even considering an independent perusal of the book.

Annie and her grandfather are pen pals in *Dear Annie* (Caseley, 1991). The book shows Mother writing the letters, and as Annie gets a little older, Annie dictates the letters to Mother. It is not until Annie is school age, that she writes to Grandpa herself. In *Don't Tease the Guppies* (Collins, 1994) Jon takes his younger brother Tim to the aquarium . Tim gets into difficulty because he misreads the signs. The text states Tim's version and then his brother or another adult corrects him. There is no attempt to discuss the signs or words he encounters, just a reinforcement that Tim can't read.

No Dogs Allowed (Cutler, 1992) reinforces the message that youngsters can't read. This book is a collection of episodes about the Fraser family. At school there is a contest to see who reads the most books in a week and does the best special book project. The two Fraser brothers decide to collaborate. Five year old Edward does the looking at books and drawing of pictures, while reading and writing are reserved for eight year old Jason. In these books, the implicit message is young children cannot not read or write. One only reads or writes, when one does it like an adult.

Reading aloud is portrayed in 24% of the titles in this study. Across the data source, reading aloud happens in a variety of settings, with a wide range of age groups, and as both a pleasant task and an unpleasant task. Table 2 (Insert here.) lists eleven different instances where reading aloud occurred in the texts. The most frequent use of reading aloud (N = 6) was a parent reading aloud to a young child while putting the child to bed. When family members were older or were not pictured in storybook reading at bedtime, then they were categorized as family members reading together, such as Tom and his grandfather reading the Sunday comics together, (dePaola, 1993). Family members reading together (N = 5) tied with reading aloud as an unpleasant school

task (N = 5). Two other categories tied (N = 3), reading aloud as a positive model by the teacher or a peer and a young child reading books to her younger brother or other children.

A striking feature that stood out among the books was the number of **children or peers who taught one another to read or helped another child or peer to learn to read better.** Books showed children or peers helping characters to read more frequently than were teachers shown in such roles. In *Just Call Me Stupid* (Birdeye, 1993), Celina, a new neighbor moves in who loves to read. She is assigned to the same classroom as Patrick. For years Patrick struggled with reading and went to the reading teacher. Based on the interest and role model provided by Celina, Patrick becomes interested in reading.

In *Shark in School* (Giff, 1994), Matthew has moved during the summer. He makes friends with J.P., a girl next door, who takes Matthew to the library and helps him read two books, which the teacher required before the first day of school. In his new school, Matthew becomes a reader. The character Anna in *Amber on the Mountain* (Johnston, 1993) teaches Amber how to read. Since Amber lives in the mountains, there was no teacher for the village. A young girl, Anna, who comes from the city, teaches Amber to read. This pattern of children or peers helping one another to read is seen frequently through out the texts. This values the social dimension of literacy.

Self-taught readers and/or writers are another visible pattern which develops, especially among the books with historical dimensions. In the biography of Frederick Douglas (Girard, 1994) young Frederick teaches himself to read and write, while Benjamin Banneker (Pinkney, 1994) teaches himself astronomy and writes and publishes his own almanac. In *Letters from a Slave Girl* (Lyons, 1992), Harriet was taught to read and spell by Miss Margaret, but was left to her own to learn how to write. Alyce in *Midwife's Apprentice* (Cushman, 1995) took a discarded page with an inkblot on it to practice identifying letters and sometimes even words that were familiar to her. Once Lyddie (Paterson, 1991) heard Betsy reading a story aloud, she went to the library and borrowed the same book so she could try to read the book herself.

Another pattern is **learning to read**. Actually this category may be subdivided into those learning to read for the first time versus those characters who find reading a difficult experience and characters who look upon themselves as individuals who can't read. None of the titles in the study show a young child going to school and learning how to read. Hog-Eye (Meddaugh, 1995) is a young pig who is a good reader, but the readers of the book have no idea how she learned to read. The closest that a reader gets to view someone learning to read is in the *School House Mouse* (King-Smith, 1995) where a mouse, Flora, observes how the first graders learn to read. Flora notices things like standing in line to have the teacher check one's work, black marks on the paper, noises the child makes, and large colored pictures with a single word written under the picture. Among books in the study, the only in depth view of age appropriate characters learning to read are anthropomorphic characters. A pig is introduced as a proficient reader while a mouse learns to read and later teaches her peers.

A Voice in the Wind by Lasky (1993) has an incidental part of the story which illustrates the conflict between different approaches to teaching beginning reading. Charlie and Molly are twins in the first grade and they complain to an older sibling that they can't read. The sibling tries to reassure them that they already know how to read. However, the twins are caught in a change of reading methods, since they do not know the sound of silent "e". The twins do not remain very long in this school as the family moves to New Mexico to investigate caves and the children's education once again falls to the nanny along with using the southwest as the curriculum.

The other portrayals of learning to read are characters who are self taught or characters who for historical reasons were never taught to read. The reader observes Booker in *More than Anything Else* (Battle-Lavert, 1995) and Addy in *Addy Learns a Lesson* (Porter, 1993) working hard to read, but these characters are not set in the present time, nor are these characters learning to read within an age appropriate time.

Among the characters who are struggling to read or who have internalized the fact that they can't read, are the main characters in the following books: *Egg-Drop Blues* (Banks, 1995), *My Name is Brian* (Betancourt, 1993), *Adam Zigzag* (Barrie, 1994), and *The Best Fight* (Schlieper,

1995). In all four books, the main character is a boy, in the fifth, sixth, or seventh grade who has dyslexia, which causes him to do poorly in school. There characters all experience difficulty reading. The reader of these titles sees very little of the classroom instruction that the characters receive in school, except in Egg-Drop Blues, where his mother refused to allow Judge to be sent to a special school. In these four books, the main characters verbalize various organizational strategies which will help them learn better, as they just have to live with dyslexia.

In four other books, *Just Call Me Stupid*, (Birdseye, 1993), *Shark in School* (Giff, 1994), *Coaching Ms. Parker* (Heymsfeld, 1992), and *Darnell Rock Reporting* (Myers, 1994) the main characters experience an early problem with reading, but something happens to turn these characters into readers or writers in their classrooms. Patrick, in *Just Call Me Stupid,* has developed an interest in books due to his neighbor and peer, Celina. In school, encounters with classmates and the reading teacher convinced Patrick that he was stupid. Later, Patrick won a school writing contest and needed to read his story aloud to the school assembly. Again, his classroom teacher offered to help Patrick, but he decided to retell is story, rather than reading it. In *Shark in School* , Matthew has a teacher who loves to read. Matthew was reading a book and his teacher commented that she could see that he liked to read. Reading in his new school was quite different than his previous school. Everyone was reading a different book.

The pupils in Ms. Parker's room also read books. In *Coaching Ms. Parker,* Ms. Parker realizes that Mike didn't read the book he wrote about in his book journal. She sensitively talks to Mike and tells him that when she read his journal, she wondered if he had ever read the book. Mike responds that he didn't have a book to read. Ms. Parker then models how to select a book to read. In *Coaching Ms. Parker* there appears one of the few instances in the study data when the reader observes a teacher providing instructional support to a student. Ms. Parker models how to select a book and provides book talks to help Mike make his choice of which book to read. Not only is instruction modeled, but Ms. Parker demonstrates intelligent teacher behavior.

The principal assigns Darnell Rock to the school newspaper staff for disciplinary reasons. Darnell becomes interested in covering the news and writes a piece on the homeless. Throughout

the story, the school librarian provides support to Darnell. In *Darnell Rock Reporting* the reader learns about an intrinsically motivated student who now has an interest in school.

These four books, Just *Call Me Stupid*, (Birdseye, 1993), *Shark in School* (Giff, 1994), *Coaching Ms. Parker* (Heymsfeld, 1992), and *Darnell Rock Reporting* (Meyers, 1994) all present characters who experience difficulty reading, yet with caring and competent teachers or librarians, all students become viewed as successful readers. These books picture the influence of the school in the main character's development as a reader or writer. In contrast, *Egg-Drop Blues* (Banks, 1995), *My Name is Brian* (Betacourt, 1993), *Adam Zigzag* (Barrie, 1994), and *The Best Fight* (Schlieper, rarely show the characters in a classroom situation in school. Parents help these characters better cope with their reading difficulties and the characters keep reciting various coping strategies.

Some books in the study **mention other works of children's or adolescent literature** within the text. Table 3 (insert here) tallies the titles mentioned within the books in the study. Forty-nine different titles are mentioned within the texts in the study. Two titles are mentioned three times, *The Bible*, and *Charlotte's Web*. Literature which was mentioned twice includes: *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl, Call of the Wild,* and *the Three Little Pigs*. The remainder of the titles appeared in only one of the books in the study. Although the books in the study carried copyright dates from 1990 to 1995, none of the internal references to specific books, poems, or short stories were published recently. Many of the titles, such as *Call of the Wild, Pride and Prejudice, The Odyssey, Great Expectations*, and *Animal Farm*, represent the traditional literature cannon. Very few of these books mentioned have characters from diverse racial or cultural groups. One exception to this, is in *Maizon at Blue Hill*, when Maizon recommends to her classmates that they read *The Bluest Eye*.

Approximately one-third of the books in the study have a school setting. Some of these titles mention school activities. The **instructional activities which portray reading and writing**, present a very traditional view of school. For example, Phillip in *Nothing but the Truth* (Avi, 1990) has to read *Call of the Wild* and takes a test where he must regurgitate what the teacher thinks,

Meiko in *Meiko and the Fifth Treasure* (Coerr, 1993) lists reading as her favorite subject, yet the author does not portray any reading experiences in Meiko's school in the novel, *Absolutely CHAOS* revolves around a summer reading list. Most of the book is spent reading books on the summer reading list and writing in the journal. The three Magic *School Bus* books, (Cole, 1992, Cole 1994, and Cole 1995) present project or thematic teaching. Yet, other than looking at the products of the classroom in the illustrations, the reader has no idea how the students developed this work or how the teacher supported the students, thematically or whether the students engaged in cooperative learning or inquiry groups.

Donavan's Word Jar, (DeGross, 1994); *Faith, Hope, and Chicken Feathers* (Wyman, 1994) and *Yang the Third and Her Impossible Family* (Namioka, 1995) **focus on vocabulary**. In *Donavan's Wood Jar*, Donavan simply collects words. Words he likes the sound of, interesting words, and words he hadn't heard before, but the story does not ground these words in meaning. The teacher in *Faith, Hope, and Chicken Feathers* gives assignments, such as the word for tomorrow and asks reading groups to make a listing of their vocabulary words on chart paper. This vocabulary appears unconnected to the context of the ciassroom. In contrast, in *Yang the Third and Her Impossible Family* daughter Mary is trying her best to learn how to be "American" so she can fit into her new home in Seattle. She has Americanized her name and keeps a list of American slang phrases. Mary learns that vocabulary is more than the words themselves, it is the rich reservoir of meaning or nuances of meaning which impacts the use of language. In *Donavan's Word Jar* and *Faith, Hope, and Chicken Feathers* the reservoir of meaning is omitted.

Another category of books **focus on letters, sounds, cursive writing, orthography, calligraphy, and spelling**. There isn't a study book which depicts a young, school age child learning to read. *Beneath the Stone*: *A Mexican Zapotec Tale* (Wolf, 1994) chronicles six year old Leo's experiences and those of his immediate family. One page shows Leo in school, but the reader is not told much information about how Leo learns to read. The other example, of beginning initial reading concern animals given human qualities. In *The School Mouse* (King-Smith, 1995) Flora, a mouse, assembles a group of mice to teach them to read. Here the

reader learns about the importance of learning the alphabet, individual letters and reading orally without pictures. Flora also knows how to monitor the progress of her students' reading in the context of connected text, while she pays particular attention to words incorrectly read.

Another group of books deal with adults learning to read, such as *Maniac Magee* (Spinelli, 1990), who teaches his homeless friend Grayson. Again there is a focus on letters or sounds, although Maniac does find some discarded books at the library to use, such as *The Little Engine Engine that Could* and *Mike Mulligan's Steam Shovel*, but the reader does not observe these books being read. The frog in *The Bird, the Frog, and the Light: A Fable* (Avi, 1994) cries out for help to learn to read. The focus begins with a letter focus—the letter R—R is for reading. The father in *Papa's Stories* (Johnson, 1994) asks his wife to teach him to read, but the reader does not observe this. Another group of adults in stories, for example in *Nightjohn* (Paulsen, 1993); *More than Anything Else* (Bradby, 1995); *Addy Learns a Lesson* (Porter, 1993), are set many years ago. The little information that the reader learns about how these adults learned to read shows a letter-sound emphasis.

The titles which depict children having reading difficulties, also show an emphasis on sounds and letters. In *Just Call Me Stupid* (Birdeye, 1993) the reading teacher, Mrs. Nagle, insists on teaching Patrick with isolated sounds and worksheets. Sixth grade Brian in *My Name of Brian* (Betancourt, 1993) goes after school to a tutor who begins by having Brian write the letters of the alphabet, then read the letters off flash cards and tell her the sounds. The tutor tells Brian that the work is elementary, but it will lead to more advanced work.

The focus on words and sounds is augmented in the literature with an emphasis on handwriting and spelling. This focus also occurs beyond the titles depicting dyslexia. Maggie in *Muggie Maggie* (Cleary, 1990) does not see any reason to learn cursive writing, since she can use the computer. Montgomery in *In Trouble with Teacher* (Demuth, 1995), draws great pictures and writes wonderful stories in yet he is afraid that his teacher only cares about his terrible spelling. Eventually his teacher gives Montgomery a spell check.

This emphasis on spelling, orthography, and calligraphy is seen in books depicting other language systems and a factual book on letters. *At the Beech* (Lee, 1994) and *In the Snow* (Lee, 1995) demonstrate the picture quality of the Chinese alphabet. In one book the characters are drawn in the sand and the other book in the snow. Through illustrations showing the characters and pictures, associations are made with the specific words. Another book which looks at the drawing of letter characters is *Meiko and the Fifth Treasure* (Coerr, 1993). Meiko was urged to enter a school calligraphy contest. She once again finds the fifth treasure, beauty in heart which enables his to paint the winning word picture. In a totally different manner, *The Letter Jesters* (Falwell, 1994) is a factual book, describing how typefaces express different emotions by changing the font or typeface. This book is related to printing.

Printing is described in historical, and in contemporary terms. The history of the printing press is the focus of a biography about the life of Gutenberg (Fisher, 1993) or what is known about his life. Before the invention of the printing press, Wilson (1994) details in *Bibles and Bestiaries: A Guide to Illuminated Manuscripts* the way books were made in the Middle Ages when they were written by hand. These illustrations or decorations were drawn by hand around the borders, and often embellished with real gold or silver. The Wilson book has exquisite reproductions from the Pierpont Morgan Library holdings of these early hand written books or illuminations.

Burns in *The Stepping through History: Writing* (1995) also presents illustrated factual information on the **history of writing or alphabets**, making books and modern technology which is used today to make books. Another factual book on the same topic is *Book* by Brookfield (1993). This book uses text and photographs to trace the evolution of the written word, from pictures to bookmaking. Many illustrations come from the British Library and British Museum. The high quality presentation of this factual material on the history of writing and books, makes these topics accessible to children and these books should also arouse the curiosity of the young readers.

On a more contemporary note, other titles deal with book publishing. Christelow in *What Do Authors Do?* (1995) describes the process of writing a book from the germination of an idea and the final book marketing tour. The book has cartoon like characters who speak in speech balloons.

The book underscores the meaning of the revision process as they show an author writing at the computer screen. The book also describes authors reading their stories to family members and friends in writing groups for suggestions.

Guthrie, Bentley, and Arnsteen (1994) have written a book designed for young authors in which they describe how students can write, illustrate, and produce their own books in the classroom. Another book describes the professional book production industry. Kehoe in *A Book Takes Root: The Making of a Picture Book* (1993) follows the production of a picture book at Carolrhoda Press. Photographs capture the various steps in the process and add to the authenticity of the strong text.

Various forms of writing are the organizational structure for some titles. Just because the book is written in the form of letters or a diary does not mean that writing is the focus of the content of the book. The following books are written as a series of dated entries—either as a diary or as a journal and published between 1990 to 1995: *Nothing but the Truth* by Avi (1990); *Strider* by Cleary (1991); *Absolutely CHAOS* by Creech (1990); *Petey Moroni's Camp Runamok Diary* by Cummings (1992); *The Bittersweet Time* by Ducey (1995); *Fat Chance* by Newman (1994); *The Wretched Stone* by Van Allsburg (1991), and *Amelia's Notebook* by Moss (1995). The journal that thirteen year old Mary Lou keeps one summer was assigned by her English teacher in *Absolutely CHAOS*. She records her assigned summer reading and then some. By the end of the summer she wonders whether she will turn in the journal.

The letter form is another style of writing seen in juvenile books. The following books are written as a series of letters. *Dear Peter Rabbit* by Ada (1994); *Jolly Pocket Postman* by Ahlberg and Ahlberg (1995); *Dear Annie* by Caseley (1991); *Dear Rebecca, Winter Is Here* by George (1993); Letters from Rifka by Hesse (1992); and *Letters from a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs* by Lyons (1992). Letters provide a good model for children's writing and *Letters from Rifka* and *Letters from a Slave Girl: the Story of Harriet Jacobs* also depict a strong positive message about reading in everyday life. Outside the total letter format, some books have characters

sending and receiving letters throughout the story, including *Mieko and the Fifth Teasure* by Coerr (1993) and *You Can't Eat Your Chicken Pox*, Amber Brown by Danziger (1995).

Although many books are written in the form of letters or journals, there are few books which depict the writing process or writing workshop. *Libby on Wednesday* (Snyder, 1990) is one book which has a writing workshop. Five students who did well in a school wide writing contest were invited to come together to form a writing workshop after school. The workings of the writers' group are depicted in the story, including students reading their writing aloud to the group and group members responding to the writing. Although the story is set in a school, the writers' group is an extra activity outside the usual school day. The other book which shows a character writing is Jane in *Bittersweet Time* (Ducey, 1995). Jane wants to be a writer and her goal is to have a story published in *American Girl Magazine*. Through out the book, one learns of Jane agonizing over the writing process and paying particular attention to beginnings or endings.

A final category of these study books is **libraries or bookstores.** As a subset of this category, the issue of censorship occurs, since it is difficult to separate it from libraries. Libraries are depicted very factually in *Books and Libraries* by Knowlton (1991). This book appears obsolete due to the illustrations and the content, since the Dewey Decimal system covers the inside covers of the book and no reference is made to the Library of Congress Classification system. On lighter note, *Library* by Stewart (1995) shows a voracious reader whose house will soon became overrun with books. Finally she turns her house into a public library and lives somewhere else. The illustrations by Small greatly add to the picture of books consuming the house. Sis (1994) in *The Three Golden Keys* portrays a magical journey through Prague seeking to find the keys to his childhood. One of the places he visits is the library and there he reads various scrolls that contain the three golden keys. The library in *Dealing with Dragons* (Wrede, 1990) is s source of dragon knowledge. In stark contrast to the earlier libraries, the world's greatest frog library that is touted by the frog in *The Bird, the Frog, and the Light: A Fable* (Avi, 1994) is only one page of a telephone book.

The bookstore is where Lyddie (Paterson, 1991) obtains the books she wants to read while she was working in the mills in Lowell. In *Bittersweet Time* (Ducey, 1995) the bookstore becomes a great source of knowledge for Jane. It was the time of the great depression and Jane left school to earn some money in the bookstore. Instead, Jane has an opportunity to read widely and observe various writers. Both of these books depict earlier times and the bookstore was an education for these characters. In the proliferation of large chain bookstores, this view is no longer apparent.

Three books depict censorship issues: *The Rebellious Alphabet* by Diaz (1993); *The Last Safe Place on Earth* by Peck (1994) and *Bookbats* by Lasky (1994). By writing about censorship issues as themes in their books, these authors are trying to alert readers to what happens when the free expression of ideas are curtailed. The *Rebellious Alphabet* is a political fable. After the illiterate dictator bans printing, reading and writing, the little old man succeeds in restoring it and his basement is turned into a library. In *The Last Safe Place on Earth* a family moves to a suburban town only to learn that the baby sitter of their youngest daughter was a fundamentalist and influenced the child's view of Halloween and ghosts. Eventually, a community discussion was held and the community remained committed to these ideals and rejected the complaints of the censors.

In *Bookbats,* fourteen year old Harper is a voracious reader. As her family moves around the country to organize public promotion of censorship issues, Harper's only pleasures are the books she reads which she obtains from the local library. Skillfully, Lasky, the author, has Harper enjoying the many books which her parents are mobilizing the community against.

In summary, many of the books projected a positive view toward reading. One example of this positive attitude toward reading occurs in *The Bee Tree* (Polacco, 1993), as Mary Ellen's grandfather sets about to compare the sweetness of honey and the sweetness of books.

> "There is such sweetness inside of the book too!" he said thoughtfully. "Such things ... adventure, knowledge, and wisdon. But these things do not come easily. You have to pursue them. Just like we ran after the bees to find their tree, so you must also chase these things through the pages of a book. (unpaginated)

Current views of reading instruction

Pearson (1993), in a review of the research focusing on reading instruction over the past decade, proposes that:

> the most prevalent metaphor in the research was the "reader as builder"—an active-meaning constructor, an aggressive processor of language and information who filters the raw materials of reading through her vast reservoir of knowledge to revise continuously a dynamic, ever-emerging model of text meaning. (p. 502).

This constructivist view is informed by schema theory and socially oriented views of learning and literacy. From the work of Vygotsky (1978), the key role that teachers and peers play in facilitating the learning of individuals is emphasized, particularly the notion of the "zone of proximal development"—the difference between the learning a child can accomplish on his/her own and what he/she can accomplish with the assistance of a teacher or knowledgeable peer.

Constructivism is a current theoretical view of learning. Fosnet (1996) edited a collection of edited articles on constructivism. In this volume, in an article on language arts, Gould (1996) states that to facilitate real learning, teachers need to organize their classrooms and curriculum so that students collaborate, interact, and raise questions. Some instructional practices found in current prodfessional literature include: reading and writing workshops (Atwell, 1987), inquiry learning (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996), literature circles (Hill, Johnson, & Noe, 1995) and book clubs (Raphael & McMahon, 1994) predominate in the professional literature.

Gambrell and Morrow (1996) identify the role of affective factors in reading as presenting some challenge to the learner, providing opportunities for choice, and encouraging and supporting social collaboration in learning. This view of reading recognizes the important role that teachers play in creating a classroom climate the supports children in their development of literacy

Findings and conclusions:

1. Emergent literacy is extensively portrayed in texts in the study. However, there is an unfortunate message given forth in some titles that emphasizes that young children can't read or write.
2. Characters in the the study texts are portrayed reading aloud frequently. Some specific contexts for the reading aloud include: bedtime reading aloud, family members reading aloud to each other at other times of the day, an unpleasant school task for weak readers, modeled in a positive manner by a teacher or a peer, and a child capably reading aloud to younger children or peers.

3. Children with reading difficulties become better readers through assistance from another peer. This notion of support from a more capable peer is seen in some books, but there is less evidence in the books of teachers helping students to read better. When readers do not read on schedule, they need a significant person in their lives to support them as readers. Sometimes this is a peer, other times a teacher or librarian, or perhaps a parent.
4. In books depicting historical settings, when characters learned to read during the course of the book, they were likely to be self taught readers or writers.
5. None of the titles in the study depict a young child going to school and learning to read in an age appropriate manner. Children just know how to read or the titles share views of characters who are struggling to learn to read. The struggling readers often have developed poor images of themselves as readers.
6. The use of anthropomorphism or animals with human characteristics continues in children's literature as well as in the study texts. These animals are likely to be learning to read, teaching others to read, or a superior reader.
7. Texts in the study make mention in the text of the titles of other books. The *Bible* and *Charlotte's Web* were the most frequently mentioned titles.
8. Quality literature integrates reading or writing as every day occurrences and natural parts of the story rather than a special focus theme. Only one third of the study titles have a school setting and two thirds of the study titles integrate reading and writing into everyday occurences.
9. Lesser rated literature by the HBG tends to be didactic in its portrayal of reading or writing.
10. Component parts of reading or writing are the focus in many books, such as a letters, sounds, word focus, vocabulary or spelling.
11. Locating examples of children's literature which portray children engaged in reading or writing workshops are few. Within the study, Woodson (1992) and to some extent, Giff (1994) and Heymsfeld (1992) provide reading workshops. Synder (1990) portrays a fine

writing workshop but it is done as an extra add-on type activity to the school day, rather than an integral part of the reading or language arts program.

12. The constructivist theory of reading currently predominates the professional literature, yet there is little evidence of constructivism in the portrayal of reading or writing in children's literature. There is no mention of the role of schema theory or background knowledge in any of these titles and little mention of social dimensions of reading. A few partners are portrayed with two characters working together as well as the more knowledgeable peer.
13. Very few books mention reading teachers, and of the few books which do, the reading teacher is often portrayed as out of date professionally, or using behaviorist type procedures as the way to teach all children, especially those having difficulty.
14. Some of the study books portray classroom teachers, librarians, and principals in a positive, professional manner.
15. Teachers give assignments, but they are rarely portrayed as teaching. Completion of assignments is valued, not the reading or writing processes.
16. Texts rarely portrayed children having a choice in what they were reading. Yet research cites the importance of choice in what to read.
17. Literature portrays problems society faces such as problems with censorship and illiteracy.
18. In historical settings adults or older youth learn to read and are intrinsically motivated to read. However, illiterate adults in contemporary settings experience difficulty in learning to read.

In conclusion, the portrayal of books, reading, or writing by current authors and illustrators in texts for children does not reflect current literacy theories or recommended instructional practices. The texts positively encourage reading and writing, reading aloud, and the importance of literacy for young children, but the current theories and instructional practices are not familiar to authors and illustrators writing for children. These adults seem to remember their experiences with reading and writing in school or in childhood.

Further directions for this study:

In the future, I plan to reanalyze the books by categories. What kind of a picture of books, reading, and writing do books ranked category 1 present? What about categories 1 and 2? Is there a difference in categories 3 and 4? If the books were reanalyzed by the publication year, would there be a different pattern of categories emerge?

The instructional activities mentioned in the titles need to be further analyzed. Originally, I sought the locate instructional strategies, but there is little evidence of strategy use and most of the portrayals of the classroom are series of activities. These activities need to be analyzed further.

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Footnotes

1 Due to my access to books written for children, I had to limit this study to books published in the United States.

2 The study involves books published through 1995. However, the specific issue of *The Horn Book Guide, VII* (1) which will review the books published in the second half of 1995 is still not available. A special thank you to Eden Edwards at The Horn Book, Inc. for checking my bibliography of possible books published in the second half of 1995 against the production galleys of HBG Volume VIII number 1 and listing the rankings. This allowed me to determine the specific books to include in my study.

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Books with Diverse Racial, Cultural, Ethnic Groups Dipicted in the Text or Illustrations

TABLE 1
Books with Diverse Racial, Cultural, or Ethnic Groups Portrayed in the Text or Illustrations

African-American
- Banks—Egg-Drop Blues
- Battle-Lavert—Off to School (positive model by the teacher)
- Bradby—More than Anything Else
- Cummings—Petey Moroni's Camp Runamok Diary
- Cohen—213 Valentines
- Girard—Young Frederick Douglas
- Johnson—Do Like Kyla
- Johnson—Papa's Stories
- Lyons—Letters from a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs
- Myers—Darnell Rock Reporting
- Pinkney—Dear Benjamin Banneker
- Polacco—Pink and Say
- Porter—Addy Learns a Lesson
- Sardegna—K is for Good Night: A Bedtime Alphabet
- Snyder—Libby on Wednesday
- Woodson—Maizon at Blue Hill
- Wyman—Faith, Hope, and Chicken Featheres

Asian
- Namioka—Yang the Third and Her Impossible Family
- Sardegna—K is for Good Night: A Bedtime Alphabet

Hispanic
- Soto—Canto Familiar
- Wolf—Beneath the Stone: S Mexican Zapotec Tale

Native American
- Begay—Navajo: Visions and Voices across the Mesa (Navaho)
- Roop—Ahyoka and the Talking Leaves (Cherokee)

Various cultures
- Aylesworth—My Son John
- Heide & Gilliland—Day of Ahmed's Secret
- Hesse—Letters from Rifka
- Leigh—Learning to Swim in Swaziland: A Child's-eye View of Southern Africa
- Polacco—The Bee Tree

Handicapping conditions
- Vivelo—Reading to Matthew
- Whelan—Hannah

TABLE 2
Portrayal of Reading Aloud in the Books in the Study

Bedtime, family activity (parent reading to young child) N = 6
- Anholt — The Twins Two by Two
- Aylesworth—The Completed Hickory Dickory Dock
- Sardegna—K is for Good Night: A Bedtime Alphabet
- Alexander —Good Night, Lily
- Murphy—A Quiet Night In
- Smee—Finish the Story, Dad

Family members reads together (other than bedtime reading) N = 5
- Accorsi—Rachel Carson
- Heller—A Book for Woody
- Vivelo—Reading to Matthew
- dePaola—Tom
- McPhail—Santa's Book of Names

Unpleasant school task (student experiences difficulty reading aloud) N = 5
- Banks—Egg-Drop Blues
- Birdseye—Just Call Me Stupid
- Schlieper—The Best Fight
- Betancourt—My Name is Brian
- Demuth—In Trouble with Teacher

Positive model by the teacher or a peer, which inspired a character to want to read N = 3
- Battle-Lavert—Off to School
- Wyman—Faith, Hope and Chicken Feathers
- Paterson—Lyddie

Child reads books to her younger brother or other children N = 3
- Brillhart—Story Hour—Starring Megan
- Martin—Rachel Parker, Kindergarten Show-Off
- Caseley—Sophie and Sammy's Library Sleepover

Authors read their writing to family members or author groups for suggestions N = 2
- Christelow—What Do Authors Do?
- Snyder—Libby on Wednesday

Illiterate adult (Father) tries to read aloud to his child who discovers he can't read N = 2
- Grimm—Anno's Twice Told Tales: Fisherman and his Wife & The Four Clever Brothers
- Johnson—Papa's Stories

Librarian reads books to the children N = 2
- Brillhart—Story Hour—Starring Megan
- Caseley—Sophie and Sammy's Library Sleepover

Young child has to show the librairan how to conduct story time N = 1
- Deedy—The Library Dragon

Fantasy story--Sea captain reads aloud to his men and they return to normal appearance N = 1
- Van Allsburg—The Wretched Stone

Town where the newspaper is read aloud N = 1
- Bradby—More than Anything Else

TABLE 3
Books which Mention Titles or Authors of Other Works in their Text

Titles Listed	Author and Title of Book where Reference Occurred
Animal Farm	in Woodson—Maizon at Blue Hill
Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl	in Newman—Fat Chance in Peck—Last Safe Place on Earth
Anne of Green Gables	in Wyman—Faith, Hope, and Chicken Feathers
Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret	in Lasky—Memoirs of a Bookbat
Beatrix Potter titles	in Vivelo—Reading to Matthew
Beowulf	in Woodson—Maizon at Blue Hill
Bible	in Ducey—The Bittersweet Time in Lyons—Letters from a Slave Girl in Wilson—Bibles and BestiariesBirches
Birches	in Woodson—Maizon at Blue Hill
The Bluest Eye	in Woodson—Maizon at Blue Hill
Call of the Wild	in Avi —Nothing but the Truth in Vivelo—Reading to Matthew
The Cat Ate My Gymsuit	in Newman—Fat Chance
Charlotte's Web	in Danziger—Amber Brown is not a Crayon in Lasky—Memoirs of a Bookbat in Wyman—Faith, Hope, and Chicken Feathers
Children of the Northern Lights	in Wyman—Faith, Hope, and Chicken Feathers
The Chocolate Touch	in Heymsfeld—Coaching Ms. Parker
Chronicales of Narnia	in Lasky—Memoirs of a Bookbat
Fahrenheit 451	in Peck—Last Safe Place on Earth
Great Expectations	in Creach—Absolutely CHAOS
Grendel	in Woodson—Maizon at Blue Hill
How to Eat Fried Worms	in Heymsfeld—Coaching Ms. Parker
Kidnapped	in Vivelo—Reading to Matthew
Lady of the Lake	in Ducey—The Bittersweet Time
The Leatherman	in Heymsfeld—Coaching Ms. Parker
The Little Engine that Could	in Spinelli—Maniac Magee

Table 3 Continued
Books which Mention Titles or Authors of Other Works in their Text

Titles Listed	Author and Title of Book where Reference Occurred
A Light in the Forest	in Woodson—Maizon at Blue Hill
Little Red Riding Hood	in Johnson—Papa's Stories
Little Women	in Ducey—The Bittersweet Time
The Lotery	in Woodson—Maizon at Blue Hill
Man Without a Country	in Ducey—The Bittersweet Time
Mike Mulligan's Steam Shovel	in Spinelli—Maniac Magee
Odyssey	in Creach—Absolutely CHAOS
Old Man and the Sea	in Myers—Darnell Rock Reporting
Outsiders	in Avi —Nothing but the Truth
Poems of Pushkin	in Hesse—Letters from Rifka
Poems of Robert Frost	in Creach—Absolutely CHAOS
Pride and Prejudice	in Ducey—The Bittersweet Time
Rip Van Wrinkle	in Ducey—The Bittersweet Time
The Sea Around Us	in Accorsi — Rachel Carson
A Separate Place	in Woodson—Maizon at Blue Hill
The Silent Spring	in Accorsi — Rachel Carson
Shakespeare	in Ducey—The Bittersweet Time
Sylvester and the Magic Pebble	in Lasky—Memoirs of a Bookbat
The Story of Babar	in Spinelli—Maniac Magee
Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing	in Heymsfeld—Coaching Ms. Parker
Three Little Pigs	in Brown—Arthur Goes to School in Lasky—Memoirs of a Bookbat
To Kill a Mockingbird	in Wyman—Faith, Hope, and Chicken Feathers
Treasure Island	in Ducey—The Bittersweet Time
West Side Story	in Betancourt—My Name is Brian
Winnie the Pooh	in Vivelo—Reading to Matthew
Works of Edgar Allan Poe	in Ducey—The Bittersweet Time